

the TALON

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John Paul Stevens High School 600 North Ellison Drive San Antonio, Texas 78251

COVID-19

*To Vaccinate
or Not To Vaccinate*

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Cover Photo by Christopher Meeks

Our Promise

Our duty on The Talon is to present the truth on the topics that we print, with all sides equally represented.

We hope that when we make mistakes, our readers will inform us so that we may make the corrections accordingly.

The editorials that do not have a byline represent the opinion of the staff as a whole. Any editorial or commentary that presents the author's byline is the opinion of the writer.

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POINT

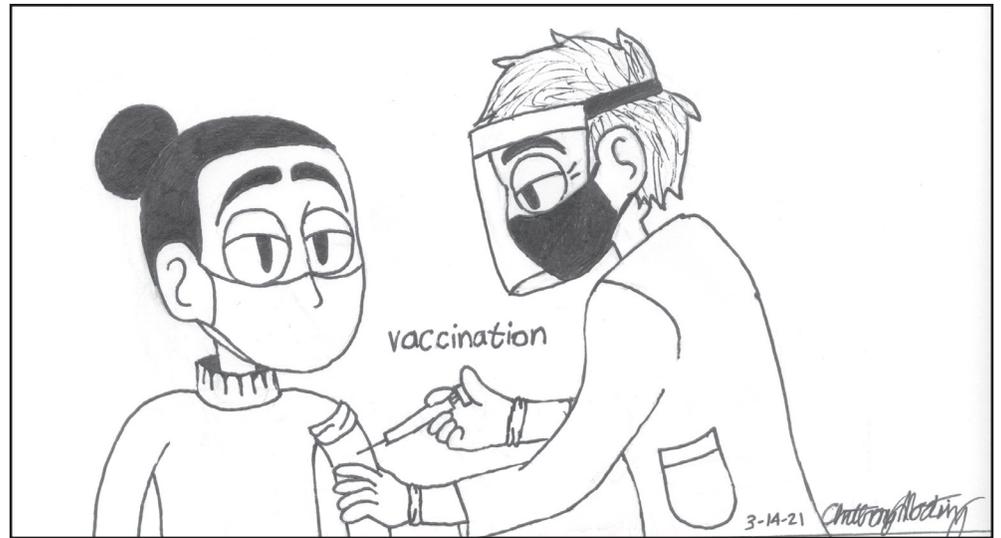
COVID-19 vaccines should be required

Focus on common good — safety for self, others

by Christopher Meeks
Editor-in-Chief

C OVID-19 vaccines are now more available than ever, offered at little or no cost to the public, but many people remain unsure about the vaccine. The truth is, every person should be vaccinated, for the sake of both the individual being vaccinated and the public around them. In short, the COVID-19 vaccine must be mandatory in order to put a stop to this pandemic.

The Center of Disease Control (CDC) maintains that all COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19, and if vaccinated persons do contract the virus, the symptoms are mild and do not require hospitalization. The CDC says clinical trials show the vaccine is



safe to take.

The COVID-19 vaccination is a safe way to help build protection from the virus. The CDC says surviving COVID-19 may offer some natural protection. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts do not know for sure how long the natural protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of possible natural immunity. The COVID-19 vaccination helps protect

individuals by creating an antibody response in the body without having to experience the sickness of the virus.

Overall, the vaccine is an important tool to help put the pandemic to a stop. Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce the chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. The vaccines work with the immune system, so it will be ready to fight the virus if exposure occurs. Putting the pandemic to a stop will require using all of the available tools.

Some may argue that the COVID-19

vaccine cannot be trusted because of the short research history behind the vaccine. The fact is that mRNA technology is not new and has been studied for more than a decade. Scientists “rigorously” tested the technology for safety before it was authorized for use in the United States.

The eligibility for the vaccination has now expanded to people age 16 and older. The COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory for all who live in the United States — for their own protection and the protection of others. This pandemic must be put to a stop.

Viewpoint

Do you think all U.S. citizens should be required to take the COVID-19 vaccine?

“I think the corona vaccine is a very good thing for people, and the impact it has against the coronavirus is very helpful for us.”



Christian Coronilla, freshman

“There’s no reason to not get it because sooner or later public places are going to make it mandatory to be vaccinated to go inside.”



Victoria Pacheco, sophomore

“I think the vaccine should be mandatory so that everyone can be safe and so everything can get back to normal.”



Leah Gamez, junior

“I don’t think the vaccine will change much because you can still get COVID-19 even while being vaccinated. I don’t see the point in the vaccine being mandatory.”



Nathan Martinez, senior

Talon Staff

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COUNTERPOINT

COVID-19 vaccines should be optional

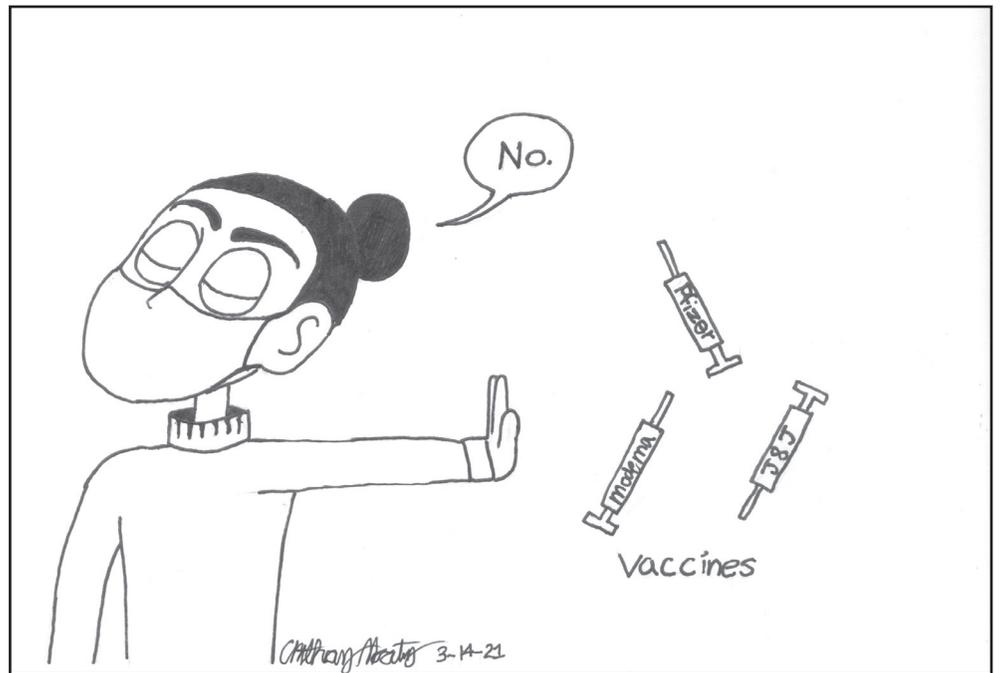
Americans have the right to choose

by Grace Pfoutz
Staff Writer

The COVID-19 vaccine was developed in less than one year's time, and the long-term effects of the vaccine are not yet known. People should have a choice to take the COVID-19 vaccine and choose for themselves what goes into their bodies.

Democracy guarantees a person's right to choose, and the government should not be able to dictate what a person puts into their body. The 14th Amendment clearly states that "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or, without due process avoair; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

Science shows



that the COVID-19 vaccine will help protect individuals from becoming very ill from COVID-19, but there are side effects, including pain in the arm, inflammation throughout the body, fevers, chills, nausea, tiredness and headaches. In addition, 0.5% of people who have already gotten the first and second vaccines have experienced side effects and allergic reactions. The side effects interfere with daily life and may prohibit people from doing things they need to do.

Getting the two

doses of the COVID-19 vaccine does not guarantee that a person does not contract COVID-19. For the first vaccine, a diluted version of the virus that is not harmful is injected into the arm. After the injection, the white blood cells fight off the virus and make memory cells so if a person does get the virus, the body can fight back. After the second dose, a person's memory cells go to work to fight the virus, creating protection from getting a severe or deadly case of COVID-19.

Advocates for

mandatory vaccination claim that citizens have the responsibility to protect themselves and the people around them. A person's first priority must be self care. If the choice is not to take the vaccine, or at least not to be first in line to take the vaccine, others should honor that choice.

Mandating the vaccine is a grievous infraction of an individual's personal rights. The decision to take the COVID-19 vaccine must remain a choice.

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3 Falcons advance to Region UIL competition

Three Falcons are advancing to the Region 4 UIL Academic Meet on April 17, after qualifying at the District 29-6A Academic Meet on March 26 and 27 at Holmes High School.

Senior Jonah Cintron advanced to regionals, after placing second in Computer Applications. Junior Christopher Meeks qualified for regionals in three categories, after placing third in News Writing, Editorial Writing and Copy Editing. Sophomore Ethan Wilkes advanced in two categories, after placing first in Lincoln-Douglas Debate and second in Persuasive Speaking.

Students must place in the top three in district competition to qualify for regional competition and in the top three in regional competition to advance to state.

Sophomore Juliet Sencion, who was first alternate in Lincoln-Douglas Debate after placing fourth, will advance to regional competition, while Wilkes participates in the UK Tournament of Champions the same weekend.

Senior Masen Aleman placed sixth in Poetry Interpretation at the district meet.

Other district competitors included senior Xavier Rangel in Lincoln-Douglas Debate, junior Annmarie Overton in Copy Editing, juniors Lillian Brundige and Beverly Coleman in Science.

Computer Applications coach is Adelina Bica; Debate

and Speech coach is Dr. Jan Seiter; Science Coach is Renee Rosbrugh; Math coach is Ronaldo Garcia; and Journalism coach and campus academic coordinator is Dr. Christine Keyser-Fanick.

Math Department distributes supplies

Math students received free supplies on March 20 in a drive-by distribution hosted by the Math Department.

Department coordinator Heather Burns and teacher Donato Rodriguez organized the supplies distribution, which included paper, notebooks, pens, pencils and erasers.

The distribution was held so that students will have the supplies they need to better engage with the class. As they head into the spring semester, students will be preparing for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test, and the math teachers want students to have what they need at home to complete the work for their classes.

The supplies were purchased through Strategic Learning in Math class (SLIM), a state-funded account for math education. H-E-B grocery store donated the bags to hold the supplies.

Rodriguez's mom and brother came to help hand out supplies, as well as math teacher Erika Walton and English teacher Candy Trevino.

Drill teams to compete at state drill meet

The JROTC Silver Legion Unarmed Drill Team placed

second in Regulation and third in Exhibition Drill at the March 20 competition held on campus.

Nine schools competed in the event, including five NISD JROTC teams and four were from outside the district.

Precautions were taken due to covid, with all teams completing the health screening prior to arrival and temperature checks for all cadets. Masks and face shields were also worn during the inspection phase of the meet.

Both Stevens teams, Midnight Falcons and Silver Legion, will compete at the State Drill Meet competition at O'Connor High School on April 17.

Taking care of family, band offers water

When the snow storm hit San Antonio, water was hard to obtain because there was a shortage of water on store shelves.

Because the band had leftover water in storage from marching season, head band director John Dominguez offered to distribute water to any student or family in the band program in need.

Students can qualify for final exam exemptions

This school year all students on every grade level will be able to qualify to be exempted from the upcoming 2020-2021 finals.

"The district decided that given the challenges of this year and how important it is that students are attending class every day, whether it's virtual or in person, given the

challenges of trying to do an exam online, it made sense to make this available to students at all grade levels," academic dean Andres Lopez said.

To be exempted from a semester exam, a student must have a second semester average of 70 or higher. Students must have satisfactory conduct. Students must have three or fewer absences between the dates of March 1 and June 3, 2021, and students must do an attendance check-in during the scheduled semester exam period (it may not be one of their three absences).

Stevens hires new CCMR advisor

A teacher with experience at three other high schools and a middle school has accepted the position as college, career and military advisor in A106.

Roxy Wright previously taught at Jones Middle School as an eighth grade math teacher.

Wright started teaching in 2008 and had always been in the high school setting. She taught at Jay, Brennan and Marshall high schools and decided to try teaching at the middle school level in 2019. She said this is when she realized that her heart had stayed in high school.

Wright said that when she saw this position open up, she knew this was her chance to get back to where she needed to be. She said she looks forward to helping students in any way that she can.

Wright said she wants to help students achieve their goals.

Pandemic derails 2021 senior class

by Grace Pfoutz
Staff Writer

As COVID-19 continues to impose changes on what was once accepted as “normal,” no student group seems more impacted by the virus’ limitations than the Class of 2021.

The pandemic has prevented some seniors from sharing their last year of school with friends and fellow classmates and has limited their options for extracurricular activities and school events.

“The only way COVID has affected my senior year is by not being able to see all my friends on a daily basis,” senior Haley Guerrero said. “Before all of this, we really took seeing each other in person every day for granted.”

Homecoming was altered, with no dance and virtual voting, though the court was presented at halftime of the football game. The Frosty Fun Run was held virtually, and spirit weeks were held online or cancelled. The Senior Spirit Panoramic traditionally taken the Friday of Homecoming week was cancelled for safety, and fund raising for teams, clubs and organizations went virtual.

“I go to school face-to-face,” senior Samuel Villarreal said. “There’s no major change for me, just a temporarily different circumstance that us students have to deal with for some time.”

Some students would say this year is by far the worst, while others say that it is the

most memorable of all.

“I would definitely consider this year the most memorable, and I would honestly love to thank the football team for this,” Guerrero said. “As everyone knows, the competitions are a big factor in the band program, and this year we sadly couldn’t do any, but the football team allowed me to experience a true marching season, and I can’t thank them enough.”

Some students report that being online works better around their schedules.

“It definitely works better with my schedule, if not really the same, but again, like I said before, I don’t learn, and it’s easier for people to cheat on tests and assignments,” senior Brandon Salazar said.

When students go to school, most of the time not spent in the classroom is with friends and family. Even though people have made new ways to communicate with friends and family, virtual communication does not offer the same connection as hanging out in person.

“In general, I’d say not being around with my friends through the pandemic is tough,” Villarreal said. “Even though most people still manage to cherish every single moment, it’s not the same.”

Prom

The status of prom was unknown at press time, as the district, administration and senior sponsor, Erika Walton, continue to monitor the health environment and the ability to have safe gatherings

with large numbers of people.

“Prom is going to fall under the same problem as everything else considering the pandemic,” Principal Ryan Purtell said. “A dance could be very challenging during COVID-19, but it’s still to be determined.”

Seniors are waiting for the decision on whether they will have a prom later this year.

“I feel like prom is an essential part of your high school experience because it’s a celebration for all your hard work and dedication over the past 12 years of your schooling,” senior Ian Riles said. “I fear that prom will be cancelled this year, and it’s disappointing because this is the last time Class of 2021 will be united, other than graduation.”

HOW TO SURVIVE SENIOR YEAR IN A PANDEMIC



Graduation

The district recently announced that graduation will be held in the Alamodome, with Stevens graduation scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on June 8.

No rehearsal will be held, and each graduate will be allocated six tickets for friends and family.

SNOWMAGEDDON 2021

Arctic blast knocks out electricity

by Zoey Madrid
Assistant Editor-in-Chief

The powerful and devastating winter storm that hit Texas on Feb. 13-17 left many families without electricity or food and caused millions of dollars in household and infrastructure damages.

Texans experienced the lowest five-day average temperatures in more than 40 years, with temperatures dipping to below freezing as the arctic blast covered the state.

The winter wonderland storm was at first exciting for many students. Many saw at least two to five inches of snow, which was very thrilling for most and motivated many to go outside to experience the rare event.

“I had many firsts,” sophomore Lianna Hernandez said. “I tried making a snowman, made my first ever snowball and snow angel. I had never seen this much snow before, so it was pretty cool to see the inches of snow we got.”

43 % households dark, cold

Although the snow was fun, low temperatures paralyzed the electric grid, causing power outages for millions of Texans over a period of days.

At the peak of the forced outages, more than 370,000 households in San Antonio, about 43% of all CPS customers, were without electricity, according to CPS Energy.

Business teacher Norma Arismendez was affected by the power outages. She was with her 18-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son, as well as their two indoor cats and one indoor dog during the power outages.

“To begin with, I do not like the cold weather,” Arismendez said. “So not having electricity made it so much worse. We could not cook. We ate things that did not require cooking, but were limited with food choices. We were so hungry for a hot meal that we went driving to look for opened restaurants to pick up food. At night we used candles for

light. I’ve been through power outages before but nothing this long nor during a winter storm like this. It was an experience that we all will remember.”

In March, families were still dealing with home damages from broken pipes and landscape losses.

Staying warm presents challenge

Without electricity, many people had to find ways to stay warm, which included staying in their car with the heater on, wearing layers of clothes, and bundling up in blankets.

“We stayed warm by wearing layers of clothes and covering ourselves with layers of blankets,” Arismendez said. “One of our cats would even get herself under the covers because she was so cold. My son had to find a sweatshirt to put on our 90-pound German shepherd.”

Along with the power outages, there was also a boil water notice. San Antonio Water System (SAWS) CEO Robert Puente said during a meeting with The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) that the boil water notice was a precautionary measure.

He added that if SAWS customers planned to consume water from the tap, they should boil it. Puente said low water pressure, caused partly by the immense loss of water via burst pipes and partly by the ongoing outages, was the reason for the notice.

“My family and I had to go to my grandma’s house, so that we could take showers because my water had turned off,” freshman Jasmine Cruz said. “We would also cook at my grandma’s because we didn’t have electricity either, and we would bring back the food we cooked back to my house so we could eat there.”

ERCOT, CPS blamed for disaster

Many people blamed ERCOT or CPS for the rolling power outages.

World history teacher and track coach Michael Inco said he had never heard of

ERCOT or knew they existed until this power outage.

“I wouldn’t necessarily put the blame on one single person or group,” Inco said. “In the end, it falls on the leaders of Texas because if you look around, the border states did not have this issue of losing power just due to the snow.”

How Texans React To A SnowStorm No Electricity

- Going to the grocery store to buy all the toilet paper, bread, eggs, and water, and not leave any for anyone else.
- Waiting in an hour long drive-thru line for Whataburger.
- Driving on icy road conditions even when it was advised to try and stay off the roads.
- Running to an outlet to charge their phones when the five minutes of power comes back on.
- Going Crazy because the weather is below 60°.



1. Snow Days. When the arctic blast hit San Antonio Feb. 13, NISD schools closed for the week because the electricity was out and temperatures were frigid. Some homes and businesses were without water, and some NISD schools had water damage, due to burst pipes. *Photo by Christopher Meeks*

2. Snow Fun. Freshman Charles Meeks took advantage of the snow and shared some time with friends sliding down the hill near the campus. *Photo by Christopher Meeks*

3. Snow Blanket. The snow transformed the campus into a winter wonderland, a rare sight for residents of South Texas. For some students, playing in four or five inches of snow was a first-time experience. *Photo by Christopher Meeks*

STAAR delayed by state technology debacle while English 1 students wait in classrooms

English 1 students arrived on campus April 6 to complete the mandatory State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), only to be left waiting in their assigned classrooms.

With teachers prepared and protocols followed to prepare for testing, students were unable to access the standardized test online to begin their tests.

Late in the morning, Texas Education Agency officials advised districts to suspend testing due to widespread technical issues throughout the state.

Students at some NISD campuses were able to access and complete the test. Teachers at Brandeis and O'Connor reported that their students were able to access and complete the test, while students at campuses like Stevens and Harlan were unable to gain access.

Principal Ryan Purtell kept students informed of the status of the testing as the administration received updates from the district and the state.

Vice principal Wendy Reyes announced midday that students should use their technology devices to check in to their classes on Schoology and complete any work that they needed to do. She said that busses would run at their normal time, after school dismissed at 4:30 p.m.

About 1 p.m., test administrators were asked to return all testing materials to the secure testing closet.

Working to make the best use of the unplanned time, Reyes announced that campus tours would be provided to the freshmen who were on campus for the first time. Other freshmen waited in the cafeteria, where they were encouraged to complete pending class work on their electronic devices.

TEA officials earlier mandated that students take the STAAR in person and on campus, where tests could be monitored according to the strict testing requirements. The on-campus testing requirement included students who continued to learn virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

High school students must pass five subject-specific courses to graduate from a Texas high school, a requirement that the TEA said would not be waived this year.

Required tests that students must pass to graduate include Algebra 1, English 1, Biology, English 2 and U.S. History.

Educational Testing Service (ETS), the state provider, worked with district information technology professionals to try to resolve the technology issues, posting updates every 10 minutes before testing was called for

the day.

“We understand the frustration this has caused students, parents, teachers and administrators,” a statement from TEA said. “What happened today is completely unacceptable. ETS, the testing vendor, experienced problems with their database system.”

Next year, TEA will work with Cambium Assessment to administer the exam.

The state signed a \$262 million, four-year contract with Cambium Assessment to administer and report results for the STAAR tests.

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Lady Falcons advance to 3rd playoff round, finish season as Quarterfinal Champions

by Michael Martinez
Sports Editor

The Lady Falcons finished the season with an impressive 13-3 record, ranked first in the district, and as District 29-6A Quarterfinal Champions.

In the first round of playoffs, the team faced off against Nixon High School and won in a blowout victory 41-21.

Going into the second round of the playoffs, the Lady Falcons went head to head with Weslaco High School. This game ended with another victory for the Falcons 52-41 and advanced the Lady Falcons to the third round to face off against

Laredo United.

The contest against Laredo United was a nail biter and went into overtime. The Falcons pulled away in the end and placed another victory under their belt, 77-71 and clenched the Quarterfinal Championship.

In the fourth playoff round, the Lady Falcons went on to face the very tough and tall Reagan Rattlers. Held at the Northside Gymnasium, the outing was a hard fought game, with great performances from players like Annalia Cuellar and Semaj Adams, but, in the end, the Falcons would fall short, losing to Reagan 52-65.

The Lady Falcons asserted their dominance in the district

the entire season. All the hard work and dedication put in this year resulted in a very impressive playoff run and motivation to get ready for next season.

Sophomore guard Callista Perez is one of the many key players moving forward for this Falcon team. Finishing her season with 168 points, 65 rebounds, 44 assists, and 41 steals, the sophomore made her name known around the district.

Perez said she was very proud of her team's performance in the playoffs and is overall happy with how their season turned out.

"I felt very excited and proud for me and my teammates," Perez said. "We

all worked so hard to make a deep run into the fourth round of the playoffs. I was really looking forward to playing teams from other regions and playing alongside some great players. I am glad I was able to make memories with my teammates this season."

Although their season has come to an end, Perez said she feels that the team left it all on the court.

"I feel like we gave it our all," Perez said. "We had an amazing run this season, being district champs and making school history. I know we will continue to get better as a team, and we will continue to make the playoffs for years to come."



 @STEVENS GIRLSBB

STEVENS FALCONS

DISTRICT 29 - 6A QUARTERFINAL CHAMPS



Boys' bowling team finishes 7-3, district runner-up

by Michael Martinez
Sports Editor

The boys' bowling team finished its season with a 7-3 record and was named District Runner-Up, as well as Texas High School Bowling Regional Qualifiers.

Led by senior captains Adam Coronado and Ryan Martinez, the boys' bowling team competed at Fiesta Lanes in New Braunfels March 28, but fell short of qualifying for the state tournament.

Adam Coronado will compete in the Texas All District Team Tournament on April 17 at Grand Station Bowling Center in College Station, Texas.

With a completely new team, the girls finished their season with a 3-7 record. Led by captains sophomore Catherine Martinez, senior Trinity Vega and sophomore Alexandra Lugo, this new roster is prepared to grow together for the coming years.

Senior boys' captain Adam Coronado takes great pride in being one of the leaders for the bowling team.

"My responsibility as captain is to know my bowlers," Coronado said. "I need to know their strengths and weaknesses, especially on game days. They don't know I watch them, but I do so I can see what they need to work on and

how they can fix it. Overall, my job is to help and encourage my teammates."

Coronado's love for bowling drives him to work hard and improve his skills as much as possible.

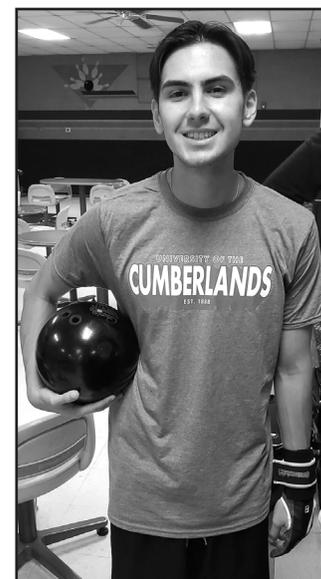
"I love it because I was the worst bowler you've ever seen when I first started," Coronado said. "I worked hard, I learned, I focused, and I fought my way to where I'm at now. There were times I wanted to give up, but now I'm here and seeing where I'm at now is why I love bowling so much."

Next year, Coronado will attend his dream school the University of Texas at Austin. Although they do not

have a bowling team, Coronado does not plan to give up his dream of bowling.

"UT has always been my dream school since I was a kid, but, sadly, there is no official bowling team," Coronado said. "I still want to continue bowling, so I'm definitely going to do leagues while I'm there. Bowling is a huge part of my life, so I need to keep going and getting better. Who knows? Maybe one day I'll make a career out of it, but we will see where this path takes me."

Senior Brandon Salazar accepted a bowling scholarship and will attend The University of



Signed. Senior Brandon Salazar will attend The University of the Cumberlands in Kentucky on a bowling scholarship. Photo by Arnulfo (Chris) Carrillo

the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky, in the fall.

Bowling coach is Arnulfo (Chris) Carrillo.

Varsity baseball 2nd in district, with 5-1 record

by Michael Martinez
Sports Editor

Coached by head coach Preston Rodgers, the varsity baseball team, sits second in the district with a 5-1 record and is showing early signs of potential to be the top team in the district at the end of the season.

The varsity girls, coached by head coach Kaycee Barnett, are having a slower start to their season,

currently ranked sixth in the district with a 3-5 record.

The baseball team has a talented roster. Senior catcher Lennox Carrazco has had 34 at bats, 13 runs, 10 hits, six RBIs, and three doubles so far this season.

Playoff goal

Carrazco is hopeful for his team's success this year and wants to make a deep playoff run in his last season.

"My expectation for

this season is to make it to the playoffs, and we are already on the right track," Carrazco said. "We just have to keep working."

Carrazco is undecided if he will play at the collegiate level but said he will take any good offers from colleges.

"Honestly, I don't know," Carrazco said. "I haven't fully made my mind up. If I get a good offer anywhere like JUCO, D3, D2, or if possible D1, then I'll

take it because it's free education. If I don't, then I'm planning on going to trade school to be an electrician or going to the firefighter academy."

USAF softball

For the softball team, senior outfielder Autumn Cortez has had a great season so far. Currently, Cortez has 11 at bats, one run, two hits, one RBI, and one home run.

"Covid may have affected last year's

season, but this year, with all the protocols, we're making the best of what we can while staying healthy and safe," Cortez said.

Cortez has mapped out her after-high-school plan.

"After high school I plan on joining the Air Force," Cortez said. "I have been talking to my recruiter about the Armed Forces softball team because I'd love to continue playing the sport that I admire."

Navia standout on tennis court, in classroom

by Michael Martinez
Sports Editor

Junior Jonathan Navia has made himself a great example of what a student athlete should be.

Navia is ranked second in his class with a 101 GPA and is ranked in the top three for tennis players in the district. He balances his school and tennis schedules along with his work schedule at Alkaline Water, where he is also the manager.

Time management is essential in Navia's life.

The junior starts off his days at 6 a.m. with a workout. Navia works at his job from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and he attends his Zoom classes from

work. Tennis practice and training runs from 3:30 to 8 p.m., and he finishes his days off with school work, which he generally finishes around midnight.

To Navia, tennis is a priority and much more than a game. His love for the game pushes him to get better and better.

"Tennis to me is much more than a sport — it's a part of me," Navia said. "It's a part that will continue to be with me as I grow up and until I am physically unable to play. It has brought me so many opportunities, like making new friends, meeting new coaches, traveling all around the state to play in tournaments, but, most

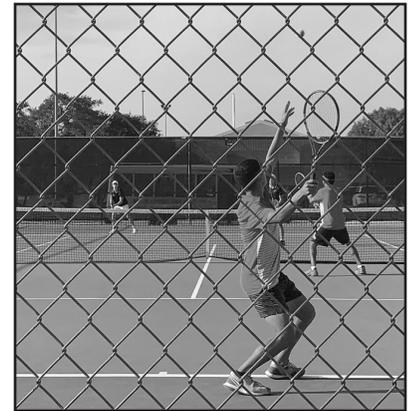
importantly, it taught me some of the biggest lessons in life."

Although all his responsibilities sometimes become overwhelming, Navia keeps moving forward and putting in hard work.

"At times I think that having to keep up with school, tennis, and work becomes difficult and extraneous; however, I remind myself that all the work I put in now will eventually pay off later in life," Navia said. "I prioritize by finishing all my school work because before I am an athlete, I am a student first."

Navia plans to play tennis at the collegiate level and wants to attend UCLA.

"My goal for the future is to be wherever the man up



Serving. During a doubles match against O'Connor, junior Jonathan Navia serves the ball, while his partner, junior Isaiah Adames, stands ready at the net. *Photo by Lisa Navia*

there has planned for me," Navia said. "I plan to try to play at D2 or D1 level for tennis, and I would like to get into UCLA, where I want to major in oncology."

Boys' soccer advances to 1st round playoffs vs. Del Rio

by Michael Martinez
Sports Editor

The boys' varsity soccer team advanced to playoffs for the first time in five years, where they fell to Del Rio 4-2, after a great first half performance.

The boys' team, coached by head coach Corwyn Ritch, finished the season fourth in the district, with an 8-6-2 record and a record of 11-11-3 overall.

The girls' team, coached by head coach Warren Graham, finished the season fifth in the district with a 6-8-1 record. Although the team missed the playoffs, they go into the offseason to prepare to make a big impact next season.

Senior center midfielder and goalkeeper Mario

Ceballos is one of the captains of the boys' team with one goal on the season and one of the most respected players on this talented squad.

His last year at Stevens, Ceballos wanted to make this season the best one.

"The final season means to make it the best one," Ceballos said. "For this final season, I would like us to be successful and bring positivity as we move forward."

Ceballos plans to continue his career in soccer at the collegiate level next year.

"I have already committed to Central Baptist College," Ceballos said. "It is a four-year university in Arkansas, and that is where I will continue to play soccer."

Senior Anissa Alvarado is one of the captains for the

girls' team and has played soccer all four years of high school.

Alvarado is heartbroken knowing that this is going to be her final season playing high school soccer.

"Being a senior is something I don't take lightly, and it means a lot to me to be in this program all four years," Alvarado said. "This final season is very humbling and sad for me. I grew up playing this sport, and this being my last season is very heartbreaking and sad to think about."

Alvarado said COVID-19 has been a difficult obstacle but is something the team overcame.

"COVID-19 has affected this season by not letting us bond as much as we would've



Playoff Intensity. Fighting for possession of the ball during the playoff game against Del Rio on March 26 is senior Andres Quintero. *Photo by Jesusita Aldrete*

liked," Alvarado said. "We have had to reschedule games and practices, and it's been hard on everyone. COVID-19 has been such a hard obstacle we've had to overcome, but it's made us stronger as a team. I wouldn't want to go through this with any other team."

'Operation Starfish' initiative in full swing, designed to help students recover grades

by Christopher Meeks
Editor-in-Chief

“Operation Starfish” is in full swing, as teachers, administrators and counselors work together to help students recover from failing grades and to assist them in earning the credits they need to graduate or advance to the next grade level in the fall.

The program is based on a story shared with faculty and staff by Principal Ryan Purtell:

After a storm that washed up thousands of starfish onto the shore of a beach, an old man was walking along the shore and witnessed a little girl throwing starfish back into the ocean in an attempt to save them.

The old man watched the girl in her futile effort.

“Look, girl, there are hundreds of thousands of starfish on this beach, you cannot possibly throw all these starfish back, what difference does it make?” the old man said.

As he finished speaking, the young girl turned around and threw another one of the starfish into the water.

“Well, it mattered to that one,” the little girl replied.

Helps students pass

“Operation Starfish” is designed to help as many students as possible who are failing a class to pass for the school year, with teachers

offering a variety of ways for students to learn and master skills required by Texas Education Association (TEA) guidelines. By completing the work and demonstrating mastery, students are able to regain the credits they need to pass classes and graduate or advance to the next grade level in the fall.

Grade recovery plans

“When we begin to look at the results of how many students at Stevens failed to pass their first semester classes, it’s pretty scary,” Purtell said. “We began to work together with our teachers to provide individualized plans for each student for them to be able to regain credit for the first semester.”

Administrators and counselors communicate with families and parents of students that had failed classes to offer them the opportunity to complete first semester work and retest. In most cases, teachers created a specified plan for students to go back and bring their grades up to passing their classes.

Purtell and the administrative team have challenged teachers to assume the spirit of the little girl in the story. Perhaps not all students will be prevented from failing and being held back or unable to graduate with their class, but for the ones that can be saved, they are worth saving and it



It Matters to That One. “Operation Starfish” is designed to help students recover from failing grades and to graduate or advance to the next grade level in the fall. *Photo Free Use From Google Images/pixy.org*

matters to each one of them.

“We know that some of the students and their struggles that they have at home are big, and we may not be able to give them their credit for the first semester, but we have to try.” Purtell said. “With every student that we can get up to passing for the first semester grade, that’s a better chance that we needed for them to be able to graduate on time with their class.”

In-person students more successful

Research continues to overwhelmingly show that students learn better when they are face to face with their teachers and alongside their peers, according to Purtell. NISD is encouraging students who are failing and struggling in school to come back for the last grading period this year, contacting many students

and parents to arrange them into attending on-campus schooling, while staying safe and continuously following COVID-19 safety protocols.

“Operation Starfish” will remain in place through the end of the school year.

Purtell said administrators and faculty looked at the data again at the end of the third nine weeks and are taking action to help students pass by the semester through grade recovery work and building better work habits in the final nine weeks of the year.

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